1. (Four Times Amended) A method for assessing a compound's ability to prevent neuronal cell death occurring in a mammal susceptible to or having a neurological condition, comprising:

a) contacting a compound with cultured neuronal cells having activated MLK activity, wherein activated MLK activity is selected from the group consisting of MLK1 activity, MLK2 activity, MLK3 activity, DLK activity, LZK activity, and an ability to bind a SEK1 protein; and

(b) determining the number of cultured neuronal cells that die;

wherein a decreased number of dead cultured cells in the presence of the compound compared to the number of dead cultured neuronal cells in the absence of the compound is indicative of the compound's ability to prevent neuronal cell death.

2. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the neuronal cells are expressing a mutated protein selected from the group consisting of polyglutamine stretch-expanded huntingtin or C-terminal 100 amino acids of amyloid precursor protein, or treated with a neurotoxin to induce apoptosis.

7. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the neuronal cell death occurs in a mammal having a neurological disease whereby glutamate or kainic acid mediated excitotoxicity is involved in neuronal cell death.

8. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the neuronal cell death occurs in a mammal having a neurological disease comprising Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease.

9. (Three Times Amended) A method for assessing a compound's ability to prevent neuronal cell death occurring in a mammal susceptible to or having a neurological condition, comprising:

a) contacting a compound with cultured neuronal cells expressing a mutated protein selected from the group consisting of polyglutamine stretch-expanded huntingtin or C-terminal 100 amino acids of amyloid precursor protein, or treated with a neurotoxin to induce neuronal cell death; and

(b) determining the number of cultured neuronal cells that die;

wherein a decreased number of dead cultured neuronal cells in the presence of the compound compared to the number of dead cultured cells in the absence of the compound is indicative of the compound's ability to prevent neuronal cell death.

12. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the neuronal cell death occurs in a mammal having a neurological disease whereby glutamate or kainic acid mediated excitotoxicity is involved in neuronal cell death.

13. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the neuronal cell death occurs in a mammal having a neurological disease comprising Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease.

14. (Four Times Amended) A method for assessing the ability of a compound to prevent neuronal cell death occurring in a mammal susceptible to or having a neurological condition, comprising:

a) contacting a compound with cultured neuronal cells having activated MLK activity, wherein activated MLK activity is selected from the group consisting of MLK1 activity, MLK2 activity, MLK3 activity, DLK activity, LZK activity, and an ability to bind a SEK1 protein;

b) contacting, in the presence of the compound, surviving cells from step (a) with an agent that induces apoptosis; and

(c) comparing the level of apoptosis in the cells in the presence of the compound with the level of apoptosis in the cells in the absence of the compound;

wherein the compound is a potentially useful drug for treating mammals when the level of apoptosis in the cells in the presence of the compound is less than the level of apoptosis in the cells in the absence of the compound.

19. (Three Times Amended) A method for assessing a compound's ability to inhibit MLK activity, comprising: